

Kyodan

Kyodan News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN

CHRISTIAN CENTER

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KINDERGARTENS

"For what are we educating our children?" Japanese parents are seeking the answer to this question. The Kyodan has the responsibility to answer it through its teaching ministry.

The Japanese Church's educational work with little children owes its origin to women missionaries from the United States. The first kindergarten was opened in a mission house in Yokohama by a woman missionary in 1880. During the period from 1887 to 1903 eleven kindergartens were started in cities where women missionaries of various denominations worked to help Japanese churches of their denominations.

Along with the establishment of kindergartens, they helped Japanese begin schools, train kindergarten teachers in Kobe, Hiroshima, Sendai, Nagoya, Tokyo, Ueda and other places. Today most of these schools have developed into colleges of Liberal Arts, and many young people of both sexes flock to receive higher education in these schools.

Those who received their training in these schools worked not only in church kindergartens but in non-Christian kindergartens as well. Thus, the efforts of these missionaries gave rise to the kindergarten movement in Japan. The Department of Education issued the first ordinance relating to kindergartens in 1926. It stated that the kindergarten should educate children pre-school age from three to six. Teachers were required to have adequate training. The content of the teaching was loosely prescribed. According to the statistics of the Department of Education, there were 1182 kindergartens in 1927 and 1862 in 1934 (553 government and 1309 non-government, most of which were Christian.) In 1966, the total kindergarten count was 9,038 with 11,523 day nurseries, 60% private schools, 40% government. This was just reversed for the day nurseries. Number of children enrolled, 930,300 in private schools, 313,000 in government schools. At the present time there are 325 kindergartens and 112 day nurseries run by churches of the Kyodan in Japan. There are over 800 altogether, if those run by individual Christians are included.

Since church kindergartens were more advanced in their teaching and facilities than other kindergartens they naturally had more children whose parents were eager to have their children trained in Christian schools. Thus, the church kindergarten could render good service to their communities.

The intention of pioneer missionaries in opening kindergartens was to approach Japanese homes and give them the opportunity to know Christianity. After the war a new school system was adopted by the government and the role of the kindergarten in the total educational set up of the country has become important.

The Japanese church still takes the lead in the work of kindergarten and day nurseries. However, it is necessary for the Kyodan to work continuously at improving the facilities and equipment of its institutions as well as the qualities of teaching.

The subsidy to the children's work of the Kyodan has proved to be of great help in training teachers and improving the facilities of kindergartens in many churches so that they meet the requirements of the government. A portion of the subsidy is used for scholarships for students in different colleges, who want to become kindergarten teachers.

The 14th General Assembly of the Kyodan, upon the recommendation of the Christian Education Committee and the Social Action Committee, adopted a policy regarding the work of kindergartens and day nurseries. The policy sets forth as the major tasks that these institutions have to perform:

1. The Church's ministry to children.
2. The Church's concern for the total welfare of children.
3. The Church's mission to the Japanese home.

WOMEN'S NATIONAL CONFERENCE

In the twenty-five years since the organization of the United Church of Christ in Japan, the Woman's Commission has sponsored meetings with women leaders on the district and sub-district level, but this year, for the first time, a national women's meeting was held.

Attendance was not limited to delegates but was open to anyone who wished to attend. The purpose of the conference was to give women the opportunity to exchange experiences with other women, to strengthen their sense of fellowship and unity with women from all over Japan and, as the women serve in their various churches with an enlarged national vision of the church, to strengthen evangelism in Japan.

The conference, sponsored by the Evangelism Commission and the Women's Commission, was held from 10:00 Friday morning, May 5th to 4:00 P.M. Saturday, May 6th. The theme was "Here I am, send me.....(Isaiah 6:4).

About three thousand persons attended, with housing arranged for 300 women in inns, 52 in churches, and 44 in private homes. Nursery facilities for 60 young children made it possible for young mothers to attend.

WOMEN--

The preparations, which began a year and a half ago, were accomplished with the understanding and cooperation of districts, churches and pastors. Contributions totalling 4,000,000 yen (\$11,110.00) made it possible to subsidize the expenses of persons coming from far-away places. All this was accomplished completely through the services of volunteers.

This conference had no particular slogan; rather the aim was to give the voices of women from all over Japan a chance to be heard.

Following the opening worship service, eighteen persons presented their "Appeals," voiced a wide range of situations and concerns:

(1) The difficulties and hardships of the pioneer preaching point in securing a nucleus of members; the difficulties of local churches which have no working people in their congregations because their young people have been drawn off into the city; an appeal to women to become Sunday School Teachers;

(2) The struggle of many women to share their faith with non-Christian family members and to build Christian homes; the strong recommendation for marriage between Christians and the need for churches to have marriage consultation bureaus throughout Japan;

(3) The desire for older women to be more active;

(4) In social action, an example of cooperation between church women and the town women's club in efforts to oppose the establishment of a new Turkish bath in the neighborhood; the growth of political awareness in a group which undertook a study of the national Constitution;

(5) A new type of church women in the person who has "thrown out" the old concept of femininity as that of just being a good wife and is developing a new kind of Christian life around employment.

On the first day, women were divided into groups to discuss Church, Home, Education, Society, Government and Employed Women; on the second day, experts conducted question and answer periods.

On Friday night, a drama entitled "The Twenty-Five Year Walk of the Kyodan Women" portrayed the events in the twenty-five years since the founding of the Kyodan, from the collapsed churches after the war to where we now stand at this first national conference, with relationship with churches in various countries overseas.

From the United Church of Canada, Mrs. McIntyre was sent as a delegate. From Okinawa came Mrs. Shizue Inatori, chairman of the Women's Commission of the United Church of Christ in Okinawa.

Every event in the varied program of worship, lecture, discussion groups, and banquet started and ended on time, and the crowd of 3,000 persons flowed smoothly from one activity into the next.

In the closing worship service, a communion service was conducted, and with the assistance of seventeen women pastors and 96 women elders, 3000 persons were served in fifteen minutes.

Needless to say, the effects of the meeting did not end when the conference closed. Activities of the women of the church have been given a fresh start. It is felt that the evangelism of Japan will be strengthened and advanced through the cooperation of the women. The desire for another such meeting was voiced forcefully and so, although no time was set, there will undoubtedly be another NATIONAL KYODAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE.

